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VERA VONG, A USJ STUDENT, WON GOLD AT THE ARCASIA 'THESIS OF THE YEAR AWARD 2024', AMONG OTHERS

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CB REPORT: FIREFIGHTERS HAD A 'NOT-SO-BUSY' YEAR IN 2024

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TAIWAN PLANS TO CULL 120,000 GREEN IGUANAS DUE TO THEIR NEGATIVE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

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China A Chinese man who sailed to Taiwan in a rubber dinghy was indicted for illegal entry. His five-day voyage, seeking “freedom,” coincided with 27 Chinese warplanes and six vessels near Taiwan, reflecting heightened tensions. Taiwan monitors what it calls increased “gray area” tactics from Beijing.



South Korean investigators yesterday recommended indicting detained President Yoon Suk Yeol over rebellion charges linked to his martial law decree. Yoon denied blocking parliament or deploying troops for obstruction, maintaining the decree aimed to highlight opposition misconduct. A Constitutional Court decision is pending.



Japan achieved record exports of ¥107.9 trillion (\$691 billion) in 2024, driven by demand for vehicles and semiconductors, despite a ¥5.3 trillion trade deficit, as reported yesterday. Rising energy costs and a weakened yen increased import values, but the deficit declined 44% from 2023.



USA A federal judge in Seattle heard arguments against President Donald Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship. Plaintiffs argue the order violates the 14th Amendment, which guarantees citizenship to anyone born in the U.S. The lawsuit reflects broader national challenges to Trump's policy.

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FLU SEASON ALERT

Health officials issued a warning that the risk of influenza transmission could increase during CNY holidays

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CHINA'S POPULATION FALLS FOR A THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR; GBA BUCKS THE TREND

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STRONG WINTER MONSOON TO BRING COLD WEATHER FOR CNY

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau predicts a strong winter monsoon will hit the South China coast on Sunday, bringing significant temperature drops and extremely dry weather early next week. The lowest temperature on Jan. 28 is expected to reach 10 degrees Celsius, with temperatures ranging from 10 degrees to 18 degrees on Chinese New Year's Eve and the first day of the year.

UTM TO LAUNCH PHD IN CULTURAL STUDIES

The Macao University of Tourism (UTM) will introduce a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Cultural Studies program in the 2025/2026 academic year. The program aims to enhance cultural preservation and promote cultural development in Macau and beyond. According to a press release from the university, it will focus on strengthening Macau's role as a multicultural hub, emphasizing Chinese culture and international exchanges. The program, taught in English, combines theory, practical methods, and case studies, preparing students for academic careers.

DSAMA ENHANCES SAFETY INSPECTIONS AHEAD OF CNY

As the Chinese New Year (CNY) approaches, the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) is enhancing its "Spring Festival Maritime Safety Operation" to address potential hazards in local waters. Collaborating with Macau customs and various Zhuhai agencies, officials conducted joint inspections across fishing vessels, passenger ships, water taxis, and cargo terminals. Recent patrols revealed no violations among inspected vessels. The bureau emphasized safety protocols, particularly for fishing boats, urging operators to maintain emergency equipment.

TOURISM

MGTO PLEDGES CONTINUED GLOBAL OUTREACH EXPANSION WITH STRATEGIC TOURISM INITIATIVES

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been targeting the international market, partnering with different industries to launch preferential tourism projects, roadshows, and promotional events across multiple overseas markets, and participating in major global tourism exhibitions.

Capitalizing on digital platforms, the MGTO has built a social media presence, amassing over 9.23 million fans across 28 promotional accounts.

Last year alone, the bureau organized seven roadshows in Hong Kong and other international markets, attracting over 1.27 million visitors, underscoring its commitment to expanding its reach.

The resilience of Macau's tourism sector is evident, with projections of over 34.9 million tourist arrivals in 2024, a 23.8% increase from the previous year. Inbound tourism has rebounded to 88.6% of pre-pandemic levels, reflecting a robust resurgence in international passenger traffic, which has risen by 66% year-on-year.

Complementing these trends, the MGTO has reported a surge in hotel occupancy rates, with five-star establishments achieving 88.6% occupancy. The total num-



ber of hotel guests increased by 6.4% to 14.4 million, driven by a 57.4% rise in international visitors.

In addition to these strategies, MGTO is implementing a "going out and bringing in" approach to promote Macau tourism through innovative online and offline methods, aiming to diversify tourist source markets. In 2024, MGTO enhanced promotional efforts domestically and internationally, including further roadshows and partnerships for international tourist projects.

Search engine promotions have proven effective, with Baidu achieving 25.76 million impressions and

Google campaigns generating 368 million impressions. Collaborations with e-commerce platforms aim to boost community tourism and consumption.

The "Experience Macau Exclusive Experience" campaign reached 4.4 billion impressions and engaged numerous celebrities, significantly boosting MGTO's social media presence.

In 2024, MGTO launched the "Good Gifts Waiting for You" project, offering over 250,000 gifts to international tourists, which is expected to generate more than 520,000 claimed discounts. Additionally, "Macao Week," a key

promotional event, has attracted around six million visitors since its inception in 2020, raising Macau's profile as a tourist destination.

Looking ahead to 2025, MGTO will continue to promote Macau as a "Creative City of Gastronomy," focusing on community tourism and ongoing industry training. MGTO will also leverage government initiatives to expand tourist sources, strengthen cross-border tourism, and collaborate with regional partners.

The focus on Greater China, Southeast Asia, and emerging markets is to enhance Macau's status as a cultural and tourism hub.

TOURISM

Inbound package tour visitors surge in 2024

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU recorded a total of 2,103,000 inbound package tour visitors last year, while the number of hotel guests totaled 14,433,000.

According to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), in 2024, there was a significant growth of 63.8% year-on-year in inbound package tour visitors, with visitors from mainland China increasing by 57.1%. International visitors increased by 157%, reaching

204,000, with visitors from India (24,000) and the Republic of Korea (91,000) surging by 302.2% and 226.4%, respectively.

In addition, 583,000 Macau residents purchased outbound services through travel agencies, up by 39.1% year-on-year, and 215,000 residents traveled on package tours, up by 87% year-on-year.

Statistics also indicated an increase of 4.9% in hotel occupancy rates and 6.4% in the number of guests year-on-year.

146 hotel establishments offered accommodation at the end of last year, which was a slight rise of 4% year-on-year, though the total number of guest rooms dropped by 7.8%.

The average occupancy rate of guest rooms grew by 4.9%, with respective growth of 6.1%, 3.1%, and 3% in 5-star, 4-star, and 3-star hotels.

International guests jumped by 57.4% year-on-year to a total of 1,108,000. Guests from the Republic of Korea (321,000) leapt by

100.8%, and those from Malaysia (87,000), Japan (81,000), India (73,000), and Singapore (68,000) showed increases of 53.4%, 49.1%, 97.2%, and 24.1%, respectively.

Last December, there were 189,000 inbound package tour visitors, with visitors from mainland China (163,000) up by 9.5% year-on-year.

Visitors from the Republic of Korea (11,000) and Thailand (3,000) significantly increased by 86.5% and 83.4%, respectively, bringing a surge

of 50% in international visitors.

There was also an increase in Macau residents purchasing outbound services through travel agencies and the number of residents traveling on package tours that month, increasing by 10.4% and 4.8%, respectively.

The average occupancy rate of hotel guest rooms increased by 4.2% last December; however, the total number of guests decreased by 9.6%, and the average length of stay remained at 1.6 nights.

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrao, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Segui DESIGNER_Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheung juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR

Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Fire bureau reports quiet year with key developments in 2024

RENATO MARQUES

FIREFIGHTERS had a "not so busy" year in 2024.

The conclusion comes from the presentation of the Fire Services Bureau (CB) annual work report, delivered yesterday at Sai Van Lake Fire Station.

During the event, Commander Leong Iok Sam noted that, globally, CB's work increased by 2.75% in 2024 compared to the previous year, with 54,133 cases, including all service requests made to the firefighters.

In a year that was particularly quiet in terms of typhoons and other weather-related phenomena, the CB's overall workload increased by 5.5% year-over-year, primarily due to the deployment of personnel and equipment for fire cases (882 cases) and ambulance services (48,787 ambulance calls), marking an increase of 5.86%.

In a year with fewer requests for special services or rescue operations, these services saw

RENATO MARQUES



a decline, with the most significant decrease (-10.69%) related to special services.

When questioned by the Times, the CB explained that the recent increase in special services over the last two years was largely due to inspections of fi-

refighting systems in Zone A of the new landfills, which had a specific timeline. The current drop in these services is seen as a "return to normal" for this type of service.

According to Leong, two of the most significant tasks in

2024 were establishing a mechanism to allow local ambulances to provide service to Guangdong and Hong Kong, and constructing the intermediary fuel storage facility at the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

On the first task, Leong noted that the CB had already started a pilot program for the ambulance service to Hong Kong, which includes three ambulances (via pre-booking).

They have also prepared eight vehicles (five ambulances and three fire trucks) to conduct cross-border activities in the mainland. He stated that these services are expected to begin operation this year.

Leong also mentioned that the fuel depot has been completed, and the building has been handed over to the CB for management.

The CB is currently preparing the management system and standards before transferring fuel to the new storage facility.

Regarding the hazardous materials warehouse to be built in Ka Ho, the CB noted that construction has been delayed due to ongoing legal action related to the land plot.

The CB said it would continue communication with the Public Works Bureau. As for safety inspections, the CB reported conducting 20,322 investigations and assessments related to dangerous products. Four cases were found in which the safety standards for storage and handling of these products were not followed, and fines were issued.

AD

金沙中國片區活化項目
Sands China's Community Revitalization Programme

PHILIP COLBERT
澳門MACAO
ART TOUR 藝術之旅

2025
15.01
16.03

Limited-Time CNY Activities at Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory and Taipa Houses

- 1 | Check out Philip Colbert's Macao Edition and Signature Sculptures
- 2 | Free lobster themed Fal Chun written by calligrapher on site
2025.01.25-26 15:00-18:00
Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory
- 3 | Chinese instrumental performances
2025.02.01 - 02.02 16:00-18:00
Former Iec Long Firecracker Factory

• Lobster Firecracker Macao Edition

• Lobster Cockerel Macao Edition

More details on Sands China's Community Revitalization Programme

Organizer: 金沙中國 Sands China Ltd.

Supporting Entity: 澳門特別行政區旅遊發展局 MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

文化局 INSTITUTO CULTURAL

WYNN ANNOUNCES SALARY INCREMENTS FOR STAFF

Wynn has announced salary increments for its workers, joining the announcements previously made by the other five gaming concessionaires. Following their counterparts, Wynn will also increase the salaries of its eligible staff members by 2.5%. Those earning wages below MOP16,000 will receive a standard salary increment of MOP600. Similarly to what was announced by Sands, Wynn's salary increments will be effective from March 1, one month earlier than Melco, Galaxy, and SJM (effective April 1) and almost one month earlier than MGM, whose salary increments take effect on March 24.

MANTEIGARIA TO OPEN DOORS TODAY

The "Manteigaria" – Factory of traditional Portuguese "Pastéis de Nata" is opening its doors today in Macau, the local branch announced. According to the information, the local store will be the Portuguese brand's 16th location and third abroad, after France and Spain. It will also be the first-ever branch of the brand in Asia. As the local branch representatives noted, it is more than a "pastel de nata" store; it is a "panoramic open factory" where visitors can watch every step of the production of the delicacies, from kneading the dough to filling and baking. The store is located at Avenida da Praia Grande, 598, Edf. Milionário in Central Macau and opens from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

65-YEAR-OLD MAN ARRESTED FOR STEALING MOP24,000

A 65-year-old man with a history of theft was arrested in Toi San earlier this week after being linked to two shoplifting incidents in December and January. The suspect, identified as Zhao, is accused of stealing 24,000 patacas from two foreign employees. The victims, who reported the thefts to the police, said their cash was taken from their pockets while shopping. Police used store CCTV footage to identify Zhao as the thief. He confessed to the crimes, claiming that he had spent all the stolen money. Zhao was previously convicted three times for theft.

VERA VONG

STUDENT WINS BEST ARCHITECTURE THESIS PROJECT OF THE YEAR IN ASIA

RENATO MARQUES

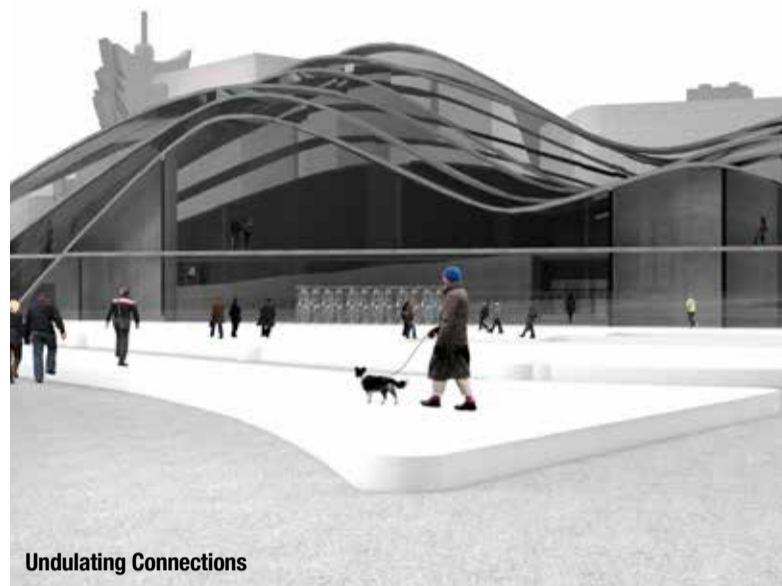
VERA Vong, an architecture student from the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), has won the Gold Award of the Architects Regional Council Asia (ARCASIA) Thesis of the Year Award (TOY) 2024.

The student participated in the competition with her bachelor capstone project titled "Undulating Connections" after the project was selected by the Architects Association of Macau (AAM) from local architecture students to represent the region in this competition.

In addition to the TOY Gold Award, which recognizes the best thesis project among architecture students from 22 Asian countries, she was also honored with Special Awards for "Best in Innovation and Originality" and "Best in Global Orientation."

Last week, the award ceremony was held during the ARCASIA Forum 22 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Professor Nuno Soares, Head of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at USJ and supervisor of Vong's bachelor thesis in the academic year 2023-24, received the award on her behalf.

To the Times, Vong said, "I am truly honored and delighted to receive such a prestigious award. I want to dedicate this recognition to my amazing parents,



Undulating Connections



Vera Vong

who always encouraged me. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Soares, to whom I am extremely thankful for his assistance and guidance from the initial idea to the final result."

Asked how she sees this recognition as a potential boost for her career, Vong said she believes these awards can help her gain recognition in the field and "will encourage me to create more interesting architecture locally to make Macau a more vibrant city."

She noted that the recognition marks a significant achievement in her undergraduate studies. She hopes more young students will see her example as an inspiration to create new projects and seek validation worldwide. "I wish that younger students glo-

bally can view this as a chance to trust that they also possess the capability to create and be recognized."

THE PROJECT

"Undulating Connections" is a dynamic building that offers a specialized space for regional and global events. Its location in a highly significant geographic area inspired the design concept, including the light reflections on Nam Van Lake opposite the building.

The interplay of curvy roofs, starting at a smooth and mountain-like angle, creates an engaging spatial experience. Part of the roof is raised above the ground, turning into a bridge connecting to the waterfront.

The project, which includes two exhibition halls, an auditorium, two galleries, a public display area, a café, and an observation deck, aims to become a center for networking, supporting tourism, encouraging economic growth, and increasing cross-cultural interaction in Macau.

THE AWARD

The ARCASIA TOY Award celebrates innovative, socially relevant works by architecture students from 22 ARCASIA member countries, providing a platform for them to showcase their ideas on an international stage. It focuses on theses that address critical social issues, display innovation and originality, and consider global needs and challenges.

CRIME

PJ busts illegal exchange and unauthorized stay operation

VICTORIA CHAN

IN a crackdown on organized crime, the Judiciary Police (PJ) have busted an illegal exchange and human trafficking operation, seizing millions in cash and arresting four suspects.

According to a PJ report, the PJ apprehended four suspects linked to illegal gambling operations and the trafficking of individuals who have illegally entered or overstayed in Macau. The arrests were made during an operation at a hotel within an entertainment venue in Cotai, following a tip-off from



intelligence about illicit activities.

The operation resulted in authorities intercepting four suspects and two witnesses. Police detained the four suspects, all of whom are mainland residents and reportedly unem-

ployed. During the investigation, officials also interviewed two witnesses. The suspects, identified only by their surnames, are aged between 35 and 37.

Authorities seized large sums of cash from the suspects. A total of HKD 2.35

million was confiscated, including HKD1,773,500 and RMB1,800 from one suspect, and HKD 572,600 and RMB1,500 from another. Additionally, another suspect had HKD66,700 in chips and HKD6,000 in cash. Investigators also uncovered multiple records related to illegal exchange transactions on the suspects' mobile phones.

According to the police, the suspects were engaged in illegal exchange activities, which involved exchanging cash for chips in a manner that violated legal regulations. The investigation revealed that one suspect had been involved in illegal exchange operations since December 2023, while another had been active since February 2023, despite previous bans on their entry into the territory.

The PJ confirmed that one of the detained individuals had previously smuggled themselves into the city and was found to be operating illegal activities shortly after their arrival. In total, the investigation indicated a significant network of illegal operations, including charges related to unauthorized stay, as one witness was identified as a person overstaying their visa and paying a daily rent of HKD200 per day for accommodations arranged by one of the suspects.

The bureau plans to charge the four suspects with operating illegal gambling exchanges and will also pursue charges against one suspect for facilitating illegal stays. The case will be forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further legal action.



CINEMA

'Heritople' from Sanmarful wins award in Thailand

RENATO MARQUES

THE documentary "Heritople," directed by Macau-born filmmaker António Salas

Sanmarful, has won an award at the Bangkok Movie Awards (BMA) monthly competition. The trilingual documentary, produced by the International Institute of Macau (IIM) and sponsored

by the Macau Foundation, features interviews with prominent Macau citizens, delving into the importance of cultural preservation and the harmonious coexistence of Eastern and Western influences in the city.

The film won in the category for Best Documentary Film of December 2024. Heritople aims to expand the public's understanding and appreciation of Macau's cultural legacy.

It includes interviews with key figures, including Ip Tat, president of the Na Tcha Temple Association; Harry Kwah Hou Ieong of the Macao Cultural Heritage Reinventing Studies Association; and Jorge Rangel, president of IIM.

The film premiered in Macau in mid-October last year at a screening at the Cinematheque Passion.

In a statement from the BMA, it was stated that, as a monthly winner, the movie is also granted the opportunity to vie for the Golden Elephant Awards, whose winners will be unveiled during an annual gala competition in Bangkok later this year. According to the organizers, the BMA is shaping the future of the film festival in Thailand and the Southeast Asian region.

It is evolving and adapting to changing trends, technology, and cultural preferences, considering the rise of streaming platforms and how people consume and enjoy films.

The Awards aim to give a stage to independent filmmakers from countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Singapore, India, Australia, Thailand, South Africa, Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, to showcase their talents to the world and nurture their filmmaking abilities by learning from experts in the movie industry.

Authorities warn of flu season during CNY

VICTORIA CHAN

HEALTH officials have issued a warning that the upcoming Chinese New Year holidays could heighten the risk of influenza transmission, with expectations that the virus will remain active at least until February.

Leong Iek Hou, head of the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control, reported during a segment on TDM Radio Forum that flu cases

in the city's major hospitals have remained stable, with a fever rate of approximately 16.2%.

He noted a decrease in severe cases compared to previous years, emphasizing the importance of vigilance during the holiday period.

As of last Sunday, nearly 180,000 residents have received flu vaccinations. Vaccination rates are particularly notable among vulnerable populations: 93% of el-

derly residents in care homes, 62% in day-care centers, over 80% in kindergartens and primary schools, nearly 70% in secondary schools, and about 55% of senior citizens aged 65 and over. Leong urged community members to get vaccinated promptly, maintain personal and environmental hygiene, and wear masks if they feel unwell.

Additionally, Wong Ka Ki, deputy director of the Department of Education and

Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), reported a vaccination rate nearing 80% for non-tertiary students. Infections among this age group have been consistent with prior years.

In response to potential outbreaks, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has called on social service organizations to develop contingency plans and conduct regular drills.

Hoi Va Pou, deputy director of the IAS, highlighted specific measures like a "morning control" system in childcare and day centers to ensure timely medical intervention for those showing symptoms.

AVIATION

AIRPORT TO HEIGHTEN SECURITY SYSTEMS

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macau International Airport will install eight new security channels later this year, according to Macau International Airport Company Limited (CAM).

CAM stated that the project will expand the security check and departure areas by utilizing the existing duty-free shop space.

Technological enhancements will be introduced to improve the security process, including eight smart security screening channels equipped with features such as automatic sorting of carry-on luggage, automatic tray retrieval, and assisted unpacking workstations.

In addition, millimeter-wave body imaging security scanners will be ins-

talled, which are expected to increase passenger security processing capacity by 80%. Passengers will also have access to self-service pre-security check gates equipped with biometric technology.

In their statement, CAM said they have been assessing the situation and working on a solution since last year. The decision to install the security channels follows concerns about long queues in the departure area's security checkpoint during peak travel periods.

"This initiative is designed to further enhance security efficiency and refine the security management system, all while adhering to evolving aviation security regulations and measures, thereby improving the overall travel experience for passengers," CAM added.

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China volunteers share Chinese New Year joy with elderly residents



Over 220 Sands China volunteers, including Sands Cares Ambassadors, company executives, and other team members, visited elderly residents at Seac Pai Van Public Housing in Co-

loane and Edificio Iat Seng Public Housing in Taipa earlier this week.

This year marked the highest participation since the initiative began in 2008.

Sands China has co-organized the annual visit with Peng On Tung for 16 years, reaching nearly 1,000 elderly service users before Chinese New Year. During the visit, volunteers interacted with about 150 elderly residents, all part of the Peng On Tung Tele-Assistance program, cleaning and tidying their homes in preparation for the Year of the Snake.

Since 2010, Sands China has donated MOP 3.42 million to support the program, benefitting over 27,500 elderly individuals. Sands China remains committed to corporate social responsibility and fostering community well-being through such initiatives.

Artyzen Grand Lapa welcomes Year of the Snake with festive dining and celebrations



Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau is celebrating the upcoming Year of the Snake with a series of traditional events and special dining experiences.

The festivities will begin on January 29, 2025, with a Dragon

and Lion Dance performance at 10:58 am, marking the start of the Lunar New Year.

Guests can enjoy a variety of festive meals across the hotel's signature restaurants. Kam Lai Heen Chinese Res-

taurant offers traditional Lunar New Year dishes, including Poon Choi and Spring Festivity Dinner Menus, ideal for group celebrations.

Café Bela Vista will serve a seafood buffet, while NAAM Thai Restaurant features lobster-inspired dishes. Vasco - Bar and Lounge will serve artisanal cocktails infused with Chinese Yellow Wine.

The hotel also offers a selection of festive cakes and deluxe hampers for gifting. For corporate and family gatherings, the hotel provides elegant venues and customized menus, perfect for celebrating togetherness during this auspicious season.

The Lobster Takeover: Philip Colbert's City-wide

SANDS China Ltd. has unveiled "Coastal Fantasia: The Lobster King's Vacation in Macao," a colourful maritime and cultural tourism art exhibition featuring massive installations of world-famous pop art master Philip Colbert's iconic Lobster cartoon persona.

Described as the largest single artistic takeover in Macau's history, it has brought a burst of creativity to iconic locations with larger-than-life installations and themed sculptures concurrently showcased at five different locations in the city: the Macao Science Center waterfront, ART Space at Macao Cultural Centre 1F, The Venetian Macao outdoor lagoon, and two of Sands China's revitalisation areas – the former Iec Long Firecracker Factory and Taipa Houses.

This city-wide art exhibition by Colbert seamlessly blends large-scale public installations with more intimate museum exhibits. Some of the installations are making their global debut and have been specially created for Macau.

Highlights include the Lobster Submarine, a towering inflatable sculpture at the Macao Science Center waterfront; the Lobster Firecracker, a four-meter-tall steel sculpture installed at the former Firecracker Factory; and the Lobster Cockerel at the Taipa Houses.

Colbert specially crafted the latter two installations by drawing inspiration from the two historic locations, paying homage to the city's cultural heritage while showcasing his signature playful and vibrant style.

Sands China aims for this innovative, city-wide pop art installation to enhance the city's maritime tourism offerings, enrich the cultural experiences for both locals and tourists, and foster the development of new tourism products to attract domestic and international visitors. This accessible art series is brought to Macau by Sands China with the support of the Marine and Water Bureau, Municipal Affairs Bureau, Macao Government Tourism Office, Cultural Affairs Bureau, Public Security Police Force and Macao Science Center.

Dr. Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China Ltd., said: "Sands China is delighted to partner with globally acclai-

med British contemporary pop art master Philip Colbert to bring his iconic Lobster back to the city in this new year with Coastal Fantasia: The Lobster

King's Vacation in Macao."

"Macau is a port city located on the coast of the South China Sea, naturally endowed with significant geographical advantages. With its unique blend of East meets West culture spanning over four centuries, the peninsula possesses characteristics that are truly one-of-a-kind in the world," he added.

The exhibition's installations showcase both the classic and new look of Colbert's Lobster to highlight the importance of

preserving the ocean and ecological environment.

Showcasing Macau's multicultural charm, the event also seeks to introduce internationally renowned masterpieces to the city, as the integrated resort operator said it "aims to boost Macau's coastal tourism offerings and promote the beauty of the city's coastline – while further enriching Macau's distinctive tourism and cultural atmosphere and enhancing its international reputation through this newly launched maritime and cultural art exhibition."

The art extravaganza is not just

a collection of artworks; it is a celebration, a carnival of creativity, with nearly 40 pieces scattered throughout Macau.

Colbert's creative process was a labor of love, spanning a year filled with sketches and prototypes. "I wanted to create new works that truly related to the city," he said, adding that the installations were not merely spectacles but dialogues with their surroundings.

Colbert had also infused each piece with elements that connected to Macau's history and culture, like the Lobster Firecracker at Iec Long.

"It was important for the Lobster to hold a firecracker—it's a



KEY INSTALLATIONS

LOBSTER SUBMARINE

The Lobster Submarine showcases Philip Colbert's iconic Lobster at the helm of a vibrant yellow submarine, arriving in Macau via the waterfront of the Macao Science Center. This inflatable art installation, with its bold colors and oversized forms, pays tribute to The Beatles' Yellow Submarine and Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures.

LOBSTER FLAMINGO

The Lobster Flamingo features The Lobster King lounging in a bright pink flamingo life ring at the Venetian Macao Outdoor Lagoon, soaking in the captivating views of the Cotai Strip during the Lunar New Year festivities. With his signature playful pop art style, Colbert transforms the space into a whimsical holiday retreat, bringing Lobster on a vibrant and relaxed vacation to Macau.

LOBSTER FIRECRACKER (MACAO, EDITION) 2024

Lobster Firecracker (Macao Edition) is a giant stainless-steel sculpture specially created by Philip Colbert for the former Iec Long Firecracker Factory. At 4 meters high and wearing The Lobster King's signature egg suit, this sculpture acts as the guardian of the venue by holding a giant firecracker, sending best wishes to all citizens and tourists during the festive Lunar New Year season.

LOBSTER COCKEREL (MACAO, EDITION) 2024

Lobster Cockerel is a stainless-steel sculpture specially created by Philip Colbert for the Taipa Houses. Inspired by the rich Portuguese cultural environment, The Lobster King changed into a distinctive cockerel mascot and stands outside of the Loja Portuguesa de Macau, acting as an ambassador of hospitality to local and international visitors.



Macao Pop Art Exhibition

symbol of the area's heritage," he explained.

Meanwhile, Colbert hopes his art brings joy and empowerment.

Referring to the motif of one of his van Gogh inspired Lobster installations, he said, "I think I've always been inspired by the sunflower, the power of the sunflower, because I think the energy of the sunflower gives off such empowering spirit, a bit like the power of sunshine. [...] I want my work to uplift people... Bright pop art can bring a sense of energy and color into our lives."

Reflecting on his journey, Colbert recalled his first visit to Macau

for Sands China's Art Macao exhibition, noting that he had sensed its potential as a canvas for his vibrant creations.

"When I first came to Macau, I really felt a connection to the city. I was like, wow, this city is inspiring me. It feels like a city of the future."

Questioned as to what his artistic plans are for Macau, Colbert said: "Probably a Lobster hotel, that would be great!"

A RICH LEGACY

Colbert is often referred to as the "godson of Andy Warhol." He has held over 50 solo exhibitions around the world since

2014 across Asia and Europe, including China, Japan, Korea, Italy and France, where he held a public exhibition of his giant Lobster sculptures at Station F for the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris.

Sands China has always aimed to introduce greater diversity to art exhibitions in Macau and enrich the artistic experiences of local residents and tourists.

For Dr. Wong, this mega-event "demonstrates Sands China's ongoing support for the government's vision to promote Macau's diversification,

ushering in a new chapter for the city's cultural and arts industries."

"Macau's exhibition of this globally recognised artist once again highlights the city's unique integration of Chinese and Western cultures and its cultural charm," he said.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sands China also hosted a sharing session at ART Space at the Macao Cultural Centre, where the pop art master shared his experiences in art creation with 20 art students from local tertiary institutions.

At the Iec Long installation, Sands China is providing free lobster-themed fai chun by an on-site calligrapher on January 25-26, from 3-5 p.m. and Chinese

instrumental music performances on February 1-2, from 4-6 p.m., enriching the festive Lunar New Year atmosphere.

WHERE TO SPOT LOBSTER?

Coastal Fantasia: The Lobster King's Vacation in Macao

Now until March 16 at the Macao Science Center waterfront and The Venetian Macao outdoor lagoon

Philip Colbert's Solo Exhibition: "The Journey to the Lobster Planet Macao"

Now until Feb. 15 at ART Space at Macao Cultural Center 1F

Sands China's Community

Revitalization Series: "Philip Colbert's Macao Art Tour"

Now until March 16 at the former Iec Long Firecracker Factory and Taipa Houses



DEMOGRAPHICS

CHINA'S POPULATION FALLS FOR A THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR, GBA BUCKS THE TREND

ANALYSIS

CHINA'S demographic challenges have deepened with the country's population falling for the third consecutive year, according to government data cited by the Associated Press (AP). The decline, combined with an aging population and a shrinking workforce, poses significant risks for the world's second-largest economy.

The Greater Bay Area—an economic hub encompassing Hong Kong, Macau, and nine Guangdong province cities—provides a snapshot of China's urban demographic trends. As of earlier this month, a report highlighted that the Greater Bay Area's population reached 86.7 million in 2024, growing marginally by 0.2% year-on-year. Despite this modest rise, challenges such as low birthrates, aging residents, and regional migration imbalances mirror national patterns.

NATIONAL DECLINE IN POPULATION

China's total population fell to 1.408 billion at the end of 2024, marking a drop of 1.39 million from the previous year. This continues a trend that began in 2022 and underscores demographic pressures that have plagued other East Asian nations, including Japan and South Korea. The country's population decline is attributed to various factors, including rising living costs, delayed marriage and childbirth, and young adults prioritizing education and careers. China's demographic trajectory has been shaped by its tumultuous history and stringent population policies. Following World War II and the Communist Party's rise to power in 1949, the country experienced rapid population growth. By the 1970s, concerns over food security and economic sustainability prompted the introduction of the "one-child policy," which sought to limit family sizes through strict enforcement measures. Violations led to fines, forced abortions, and other punitive actions.

The preference for male offspring, especially in rural areas, exacerbated gender imbalances as families resorted to selective abortions despite government campaigns against the practice. Official data now lists the sex ratio at birth as 104.34 males for every 100 females, though independent estimates suggest the imbalance is more pronounced. This disparity has contributed to social challenges, including a



growing population of unmarried men.

AGING POPULATION AND WORKFORCE CONCERNS

China's rapidly aging population presents a major economic hurdle. As of 2024, more than one-fifth of the population—322 million people—is aged 60 or older, accounting for 22.9% of the total. By 2035, this proportion is expected to exceed 30%. This demographic shift is straining China's underfunded pension system, with many citizens opting out of contributions, further jeopardizing its stability. The government is considering raising the retirement age, currently one of the lowest in the world, to mitigate these pressures.

Compounding these issues is the shrinking working-age population. The combination of fewer births and an aging workforce threatens the economic engine that has powered China's rise over the past four decades. A declining labor pool could lead to slower economic growth and reduced global competitiveness.

URBANIZATION AND REGIONAL TRENDS

Despite the population decline, urbanization continues at a steady pace. In 2024, 10 million additional people moved to cities, increasing the urbanization rate to 67%. The Greater Bay Area exemplifies this trend, with its cities attracting migrants from rural areas. However, this migration has led to regional disparities, with rural areas facing depopulation and a diminished labor force.

In the Greater Bay Area, the

slight population growth contrasts with challenges such as rising housing costs and a low birthrate. Some urban schools and kindergartens, faced with dwindling enrollment, are being repurposed into care facilities for the elderly, reflecting the broader shift in societal needs. The demographic crisis is testing the resilience of China's economy. With fewer young people entering the workforce, the country risks losing its competitive advantage in manufacturing and other labor-intensive industries. Meanwhile, government spending on military modernization and infrastructure projects continues to rise, even as social welfare programs struggle to meet demand.

Efforts to boost birthrates through financial incentives, such as cash payouts for families with up to three children and housing subsidies, have yielded limited results. Cultural shifts, including changing attitudes toward marriage and parenthood, have dampened the effectiveness of these policies. China's demographic trends mirror those seen in neighboring East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea, where low birthrates and aging populations have similarly strained economies. Unlike Western nations that offset population declines through immigration, China's restrictive immigration policies leave few options for replenishing its workforce.

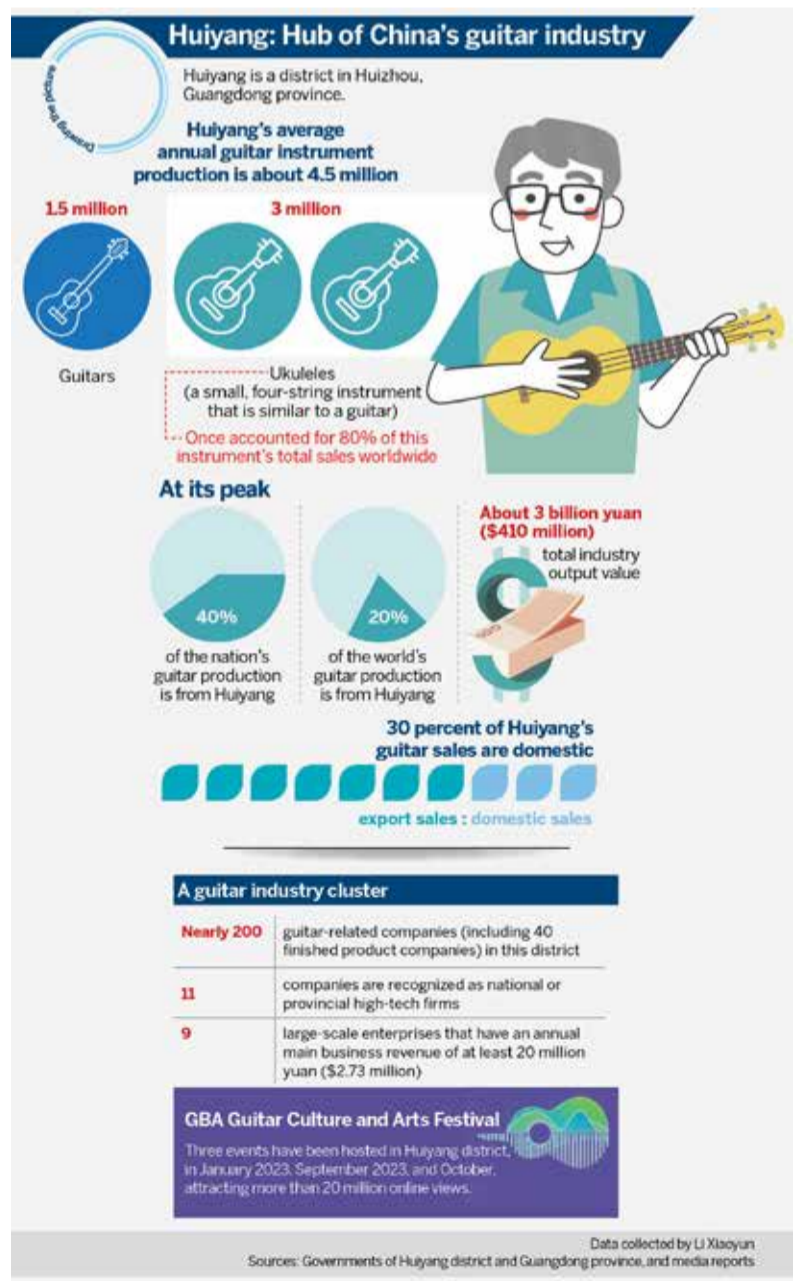
'GROWING OLD BEFORE GROWING RICH'

The phrase "growing old before growing rich" has become a

common refrain among analysts discussing China's demographic challenges. As the world's second-largest economy, China faces the dual pressures of maintaining growth while addressing the needs of an aging

population. The next decade will be crucial in determining whether China can adapt to these shifts and sustain its economic momentum. Policy discussions are increasingly focused on structural reforms to address these challenges. Proposals include raising the retirement age, improving access to affordable childcare, and enhancing workplace flexibility to encourage family growth. However, the success of these measures will depend on the government's ability to foster cultural and economic conditions conducive to long-term change.

The demographic data from the Greater Bay Area offers valuable insights into China's urban and regional trends. Yet, as the nation grapples with population decline, aging, and labor shortages, the path forward will require bold and innovative solutions. The stakes are high, not only for China but for the global economy, which remains deeply interconnected with the country's fortunes. **MDT/AP**



ECONOMY

China moves to boost languishing markets by ordering funds to invest more in shares

ELAINE KURTENBACK,
BANGKOK

THE Chinese government is trying to encourage people to spend more by ensuring that share prices will rise, ordering pensions and mutual funds to invest more in domestic stocks to help jolt its languid markets out of the doldrums.

Officials told reporters in Beijing yesterday that beginning this year mutual funds should increase holdings of onshore stocks, called A-shares, by at least 10% a year over the next three years.

Commercial insurance funds will have to put 30% of their annual new premium revenue into share markets beginning this year, they said.

"This means that at least several hundred billion yuan of long-term funds will be added to A-shares every year," said Wu Qing, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

The announcement followed



a meeting of top financial officials including ministries in charge of pensions and the central bank.

"Implementing the plan's various measures will further enhance the equity allocation capacity of medium- and long-term funds, steadily expand the scale of investment, improve the supply and structure of funds in the capital market, and consolidate good conditions for the capital market's recovery," Wu said.

The ruling Communist Party announced this move just ahead of China's biggest holiday of the year, the Lunar New Year, which begins on Wednesday, Jan. 29. It's a time when families tend to splash out on food and travel and little red packets of money for children and young adults, a time of wishes for good fortune.

Markets in Hong Kong and Shanghai rose early yesterday after the announcement but then shed

those gains. The Shanghai Composite index closed 0.5% higher while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index fell 0.4%.

China's share markets are huge but they hit their peak value before the 2008 global financial crisis and have meandered well below that level since. A lack of gains in share prices, along with falling housing prices, has discouraged Chinese families from spending, slowing consumer demand and economic growth.

Less than 5% of household wealth in China is held in equities, compared with nearly 30% of household wealth in the United States. Chinese markets, which were set up in the early 1990s, have tended to serve as fundraising vehicles for state-run companies that have launched massive share offerings but remain under control of the ruling Communist Party.

So far, the government's efforts to get people to spend more and save less have had mixed success. An initiative to promote purcha-

ses of energy efficient vehicles and appliances by paying subsidies to people who turn in their old versions of such items has boosted sales of such products. But share prices had traded stubbornly within a narrow range after a brief-lived rally late last year.

Wu said pension funds will be required to revamp how they assess their performance and companies will be encouraged to conduct more share buybacks and pay higher dividends to give shareholders better returns.

"This is a very important institutional breakthrough for the entry of medium- and long-term funds into the market. It can be said that it has solved a problem that has been unsolved for many years," he added.

Sell-offs by foreign investors and major shareholders and high market volatility have handicapped the Chinese markets, Lei Meng, a China equity strategist at UBS Securities, said in a commentary yesterday. **MDT/AP**

AD

HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR 欢乐春节

2025 Chinese New Year Activities

Gigantic Golden Dragon Parade

29/1 11:00-13:00
Ruins of St. Paul's→A-Ma Temple

Community Roadshow

29-30/1 10:30-18:15

Splendid performances presented by the dragon and lion dance teams, Mak Mak and performance groups from Culture City of East Asia, Mainland China, Hong Kong and Overseas at 16 designated locations across Macao, Taipa and Coloane

Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Snake

31/1 20:00-21:45
Sai Van Lake Square→Av. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen→Macao Science Center→Macao Fisherman's Wharf

8/2 20:00-21:30
Estrada Marginal da Ilha Verde→Av. do Conselheiro Borja→Estrada do Arco→Estrada da Areia Preta→Av. de Venceslau de Moraes→Rua Quatro do Bairro da Areia Preta→Av. da Longevidade→Rua do Mercado de Iao Hon→Iao Hon Market Park

Chinese New Year Fireworks Displays

31/1 21:45
4/2 21:00
12/2 21:00

Waterfront by Macau Tower

Parade Float Exhibition

1-7/2
Macao Fisherman's Wharf

9-16/2
Tap Seac Square

MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

TAIWAN PLANS TO CULL 120,000 GREEN IGUANAS DUE TO THEIR NEGATIVE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

TAI-JING WU, PINGTUNG

TAIWAN plans to cull up to 120,000 green iguanas, with supporters urging humane methods to bring down the animal's population, which is wreaking havoc on the island's agricultural sector.

Around 200,000 of the reptiles are believed to be in the island's southern and central areas, which are heavily dependent on farming, according to Chiu Kuo-hao of the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency.

Specially recruited hunting teams killed about 70,000 iguanas last year, with bounties of up to \$15 each. Local governments have asked the public to help identify iguana nests and they recommend fishing spears as the most humane means of killing the animals.

"A lot of people bought them as cute little pets, not realizing how big and long-lived they would become, so they set them free in the wild, where they've really taken to the Taiwanese environment," said Lee Chi-ya of the agricultural department in the southern county of Pingtung. "That's allowed them to reproduce at a considerable rate, necessitating us to cull them and restore the balance

of nature."

Green iguanas have no natural predators in Taiwan and have moved into areas that can be difficult to access, mostly forests and the edges of towns.

Males can grow to 2 metres (6.6 feet) long, weigh 5 kilograms (11 pounds) and live up to 20 years, while females can lay up to 80 eggs at a time.

Mainly native to Central America and the Caribbean,

they are not aggressive despite possessing sharp tails and jaws and razor-like teeth. The reptiles subsist on a diet of mostly fruit, leaves and plants, with the occasional small animal thrown in.

Though popular as pets, they are difficult to keep healthy in captivity and many die within a year.

Hsu Wei-chieh, secretary general of the Reptile Conservation Association of Taiwan, said his group wants

to teach farmers how to stay safe, protect their property and treat the iguanas in a humane manner.

"We're here to help see that this project is carried out smoothly," said Hsu.

Tsai Po-wen, a vegetable farmer in Pingtung, said the training was paying off.

"We used to attack them, but it wasn't any use. Now we're learning more effective, safer methods," Tsai said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



OVERSEAS CHINESE

MAN CONVICTED OF STALKING CHINESE EX-OFFICIAL BY LEAVING HIM A DIRE NOTE GETS PRISON IN US

A man who taped a sinister note to a Chinese ex-official's door in New Jersey was sentenced yesterday [Macau time] to 16 months in prison. He was convicted of participating in what U.S. authorities called a Beijing-driven pressure campaign targeting expatriates.

Zheng Congying was one of three men convicted at the first trial highlighting U.S. claims that China's government harasses and intimidates dissidents and critics on foreign soil. Beijing denies doing so and says its "Operation Fox Hunt" is an effort to bring fugitives home to face justice.

AP PHOTO



A federal court jury in Brooklyn found Zheng and co-defendants Michael McMahon and Zhu Yong guilty of playing various roles in seeking out Xu Jin, a former official in the Chinese city

of Wuhan, and pressing him to return to his homeland. There, he would face bribery allegations that he denies.

Zheng knocked on Xu's New Jersey door, circled the home to peer

inside and left a note that read, in translation: "If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison, your wife and children will be all right. That's the end of this matter!"

Zheng's lawyer, Paul Goldberger, said during the trial that Zheng later regretted what he'd done and tried to retrieve the letter. Prosecutors suggested he went back to the house just to see whether the note had been received.

The defendants didn't testify, but their lawyers said the three believed they were aiding a private company or indivi-

duals, not the Chinese government.

Zheng, a Chinese citizen, was convicted of stalking and stalking conspiracy but acquitted of other charges. A message seeking comment on his sentencing was sent to his lawyer.

Zhu was sentenced last week to two years in prison. McMahon, a retired U.S. police sergeant, is due to be sentenced later this winter.

Three other people pleaded guilty in the case. Five others also were charged, but they're believed to be in China and haven't come to the U.S. to appear in court. **MDT/AP**

SUZHOU

Court sentences man to death over knife attack at a Japanese school bus stop

A Chinese man who injured a Japanese mother and her child and killed a Chinese bus attendant trying to protect them in a knife attack near Shanghai last June has been sentenced to death, according to a Japanese government official.

A court in the city of Suzhou said Zhou Jiansheng, 52, stabbed the three because he was indebted and did not want to live any longer, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters in Tokyo yesterday.

The case was one of two stabbing attacks on Japanese children in China last year that raised concerns about increased anti-Japanese sentiment in the country. Tokyo asked Beijing to ensure the safety of its citizens in China.

Hayashi said the court ruling, which was not immediately available, made no reference to Japan.

"We believe the crime that killed and injured the innocent people including a child was absolutely unforgivable, and we take the ruling seriously," Hayashi said.

He said officials from the Japanese Consulate in Shanghai were present at the court sentencing.

The stabbing occurred at a bus stop for a Japanese school in Suzhou on June 24. A female bus attendant, Hu Youping, who tried to stop the attack died of stab wounds days later. The Japanese mother and child were not seriously injured.

In September, a 10-year-old Japanese student died after being stabbed near his school in the southern city of Shenzhen.

Other stabbing attacks involving foreigners last year were isolated incidents, the Chinese government said.

In June, a Chinese man stabbed four U.S. university instructors at a public park in Jilin in the northeast as well as a Chinese person who tried to intervene.

In May, a knife attack at a hospital in southwestern China killed two people and injured 21 others. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

Love is a many-gendered thing: LGBTQ+ couples register marriages

CHALIDA EKVITTHAYAVE-CHNUKUL

LGBTQ+ couples in Thailand made yesterday a life-changing occasion, registering their marriages legally on the first day a law took effect granting them the same rights as heterosexual couples.

The enactment of the Marriage Equality Act makes Thailand the first country in Southeast Asia and the third place in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, after Taiwan and Nepal.

As many as 300 couples had been expected to complete the formalities at a daylong gala celebration in an exhibition hall at a shopping mall in central Bangkok, though by late afternoon the total was less than half of that.

Hundreds more were predicted to register at district offices around the country, though actual numbers were not immediately available. They included actors Apiwat "Porsch" Apiwatsayree and Sappanyoo "Arm" Panatkool, who tied the knot at the Phra Nakorn district office in central Bangkok.

"We can love, we love equally, legally," said Sappanyoo.

"And we can build our family in our own way because I believe that every kind of love, every kind of family is beautiful as it is," his partner Apiwat said.

They posed afterwards on a terrace at the office, smiling and waving while clutching a bouquet of flowers.

Similar sentiments were voiced at the mall mass event, where same-sex couple Pisit Sirihirunchai, 36, a policeman, and his partner Chanutip Sirihirunchai, 42, registered.

"Don't put a limit just because they are same sex or whatever they are. Love is a beautiful thing. We should not stop them," Pisit said.

"I want to see the same-sex

AP PHOTO



marriage law available in every country where LGBTQ+ couples are," Chanutip chimed in.

Activists said they hoped at least 1,448 same-sex marriages would take place nationwide yesterday, in a nod to Civil and Commercial Code's Article 1448, that they had successfully lobbied to get amended.

Thailand's marriage equality bill, which sailed through both houses of parliament, amended Article 1448 to replace the words "man and woman" and "husband and wife" with "individuals" and "marriage partners." It is intended to grant full legal, financial and medical rights to LGBTQ+ couples.

Partners will have equal rights and responsibilities in dealing with joint assets, tax obligations and deductions, inheritance rights and survivor benefits.

At the Siam Paragon mall, former Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin led a parade of newlyweds on a rainbow-colored carpet outside of the exhibition hall.

Current Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra addressed the crowd by video message, declaring, "From now on, all love will be certified by law. All couples will live with honor and dignity in Thailand."

Srettha, under whose government the ruling Pheu Thai party introduced the new law, offered a sharper and more timely comment, obviously referencing U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration speech on Monday, in which he declared it will be the official policy of his government "that there are only two genders, male and female."

While he did not mention Trump by name, Srettha said "a

powerful country's" new leader "announced clearly that there are only two genders in his country."

Striking a comparison between that "powerful country" and Thailand's mid-sized population and smaller economy, he said, "I believe our heart is bigger."

Thailand has a reputation for acceptance and inclusivity, and thousands of people from around the world attend the annual Bangkok Pride parade. But rights advocates have struggled for decades to pass a marriage equality law in a largely conservative society where members of the LGBTQ+ community say they face discrimination in everyday life, although they note that things have improved greatly in recent years.

Bangkok's city government has said that it organized workshops for district office staff who are in charge of handling marriage re-

gistration. They included lectures raising awareness about gender diversity and guidance on how to properly communicate with those who come for the service. The Interior Ministry has offered similar guidance.

"It's like a missing piece of the jigsaw," Bangkok Deputy Gov. Sanon Wangsrangboon said at one of the workshops earlier this month. "Society is ready. The law is getting ready. But the last piece of the jigsaw is the understanding from officials."

About three dozen countries around the world have legalized some form of same-sex marriage, more than half in Europe. In Taiwan, which in 2019 was the first place in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, 526 people registered on the first day, according to its government's Department of Household Registration. **MDT/AP**

CAMBODIA

Lunar New Year giveaway leaves four dead in Phnom Penh as crowd surges

FOUR people died and five others were injured yesterday as a crowd scrambled for a handout of food and cash from one of Cambodia's ri-

chest people as a Chinese Lunar New Year gift, officials said.

The victims were crushed as the crowd of hundreds surged forward

when the gates to Sok Kong's walled compound in Phnom Penh opened to start the distribution of \$10 in cash and two kilograms of rice, police

spokesperson Sam Vichhika said.

The victims, who all fainted in the crush and fell to the ground, were taken to hospital but two

women and two men, aged between 37 and 71, could not be saved, he said. It was not immediately clear whether they were killed in the initial crush of the crowd or from injuries they sustained once on the ground.

Following the incident the authorities cleared the crowd and suspended the rest of the giveaway.

Sok Kong has multiple investments, including in the hotel, casino and oil industries, and is also known to have a close personal relationship with former longtime Prime Minister Hun Sen.

He and other wealthy residents of the capital traditionally give gifts to the poor annually for Chinese New Year, which begins next week. **MDT/AP**

THE GULF OF WHAT NOW?

Mapmakers grapple with Trump's geographic renaming plans

WHAT'S in a name change, after all? The water bordered by the Southern United States, Mexico and Cuba will be critical to shipping lanes and vacationers whether it's called the Gulf of Mexico, as it has been for four centuries, or the Gulf of America, as President Donald Trump ordered this week. North America's highest mountain peak will still loom above Alaska whether it's called Mt. Denali, as ordered by former President Barack Obama in 2015, or changed back to Mt. McKinley as Trump also decreed.

But Trump's territorial assertions, in line with his "America First" worldview, sparked a round of rethinking by mapmakers and teachers, snark on social media and sarcasm by at least one other world leader. And though Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis put the Trumpian "Gulf of America" on an official document and some other gulf-adjacent states were considering doing the same, it was not clear how many others would follow Trump's lead.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum joked that if Trump went ahead with the renaming, her country would rename North America "Mexican America." On Tuesday, she toned it down: "For us and for the entire world it will continue to be called the Gulf of Mexico."

THE POLITICS OF MAPS ARE UNDENIABLE

Map lines are inherently political. After all, they're representations of the places that are important to human beings — and those priorities can be delicate and contentious, even more so in a globalized world.

There's no agreed-upon scheme to name boundaries and features across the Earth.

"Denali" is the mountain's preferred name for Alaska Natives, while "McKinley" is a tribute to President William McKinley, designated in the late 19th century by a gold prospector. China sees Taiwan as its own territory, and the countries surrounding what the United States calls the South China Sea



Peter Bellerby, the founder of Bellerby & Co. Globemakers, holds a globe at a studio in London

have multiple names for the same body of water.

The Persian Gulf has been widely known by that name since the 16th century, although usage of "Gulf" and "Arabian Gulf" is dominant in many countries in the Middle East. The government of Iran — formerly Persia — threatened to sue Google in 2012 over the company's decision not to label the body of water at all on its maps. Many Arab countries don't recognize Israel and instead call it Palestine. And in many official releases, Israel calls the occupied West Bank by its biblical name, "Judea and Samaria."

Americans and Mexicans diverge on what to call another key body of water, the river that forms the border between Texas and the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Americans call it the Rio Grande; Mexicans call it the Rio Bravo.

Trump's executive order — titled "Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness" — concludes thusly: "It is in the national interest to promote the extraordinary heritage of our Nation and ensure future generations of American citizens celebrate the legacy of our American heroes. The naming of our national

treasures, including breathtaking natural wonders and historic works of art, should honor the contributions of visionary and patriotic Americans in our Nation's rich past."

But what to call the gulf with the 3,700-mile coastline?

"It is, I suppose, an internationally recognized sea, but (to be honest), a situation like this has never come up before so I need to confirm the appropriate convention," said Peter Bellerby, who said he was talking over the issue with the cartographers at his London company, Bellerby & Co. Globemakers. "If, for instance, he wanted to change the Atlantic Ocean to the American Ocean, we would probably just ignore it."

FOR SOME, IT'S DECISION TIME

As of yesterday [Macau time], map applications for Google and Apple still called the mountain and the gulf by their old names. Spokespersons for those platforms did not immediately respond to emailed questions.

A spokesperson for National Geographic, one of the most prominent map makers in the U.S., said this week that the company does not comment on individual cases and

referred questions to a statement on its web site, which reads in part that it "strives to be apolitical, to consult multiple authoritative sources, and to make independent decisions based on extensive research." National Geographic also has a policy of including explanatory notes for place names in dispute, citing as an example a body of water between Japan and the Korean peninsula, referred to as the Sea of Japan by the Japanese and the East Sea by Koreans.

In discussion on social media, one thread noted that the Sears Tower in Chicago was renamed the Willis Tower in 2009, though it's still commonly known by its original moniker. Pennsylvania's capital, Harrisburg, renamed its Market Street to Martin Luther King Boulevard and then switched back to Market Street several years later — with loud complaints both times. In 2017, New York's Tappan Zee Bridge was renamed for the late Gov. Mario Cuomo to great controversy. The new name appears on maps, but "no one calls it that," noted another user.

"Are we going to start teaching this as the name of the body of water?" asked one Reddit poster on Tuesday. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1961 END OF THE ROAD FOR MONROE AND MILLER



The Hollywood screen star Marilyn Monroe has divorced her husband, playwright Arthur Miller, after less than five years of marriage.

The divorce was granted in Mexico, where a judge signed the decree. The grounds of divorce were listed as "incompatibility".

It has been rumoured that the pair have had frequent quarrels over their differing lifestyles.

Mr Miller has recently been working with his wife on her most recent film, *The Misfits*, based on a short story he wrote, although the pair were reported to be barely speaking on set.

The film is due to be released this month.

The divorce was officially announced last November, and a spokesman at the time said they had already separated.

Sources close to the couple said Arthur Miller had in fact left Miss Monroe for German-born photographer Inge Morath, whom he met on the set of *The Misfits*.

The couple married in 1956, five years after they first met. Marilyn Monroe converted to Judaism for her new husband, who rose to prominence with his play "Death of a Salesman" in 1949, which won the Pulitzer Prize.

Soon after they were married, Arthur Miller told journalists: "Marilyn will only make one film in every 18 months or so, which will take her about eight weeks."

When asked what she would do for the rest of the time, he replied, "She will be my wife. That's a full-time job."

Marilyn Monroe disagreed, and continued to pursue her film work to the full, travelling to England to shoot "The Prince and the Showgirl" with Laurence Olivier shortly after the wedding.

However, she used her influence — and risked her own career — to help her husband after he was found guilty of contempt of Congress by the House Un-American Activities Committee for refusing to reveal the names of a literary group suspected of Communist sympathies.

Marilyn Monroe went with him to Washington to speak in his favour at the contempt hearings, and her intervention is widely thought to have contributed to the overturning of his conviction the following year.

Marilyn Monroe had been married twice before. Her first husband was Jimmy Dougherty, whom she married aged 16. The marriage did not survive her "discovery" and subsequent rise to fame.

In 1954, she met and married baseball star Joe DiMaggio, but it was a tempestuous partnership and ended just nine months later.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

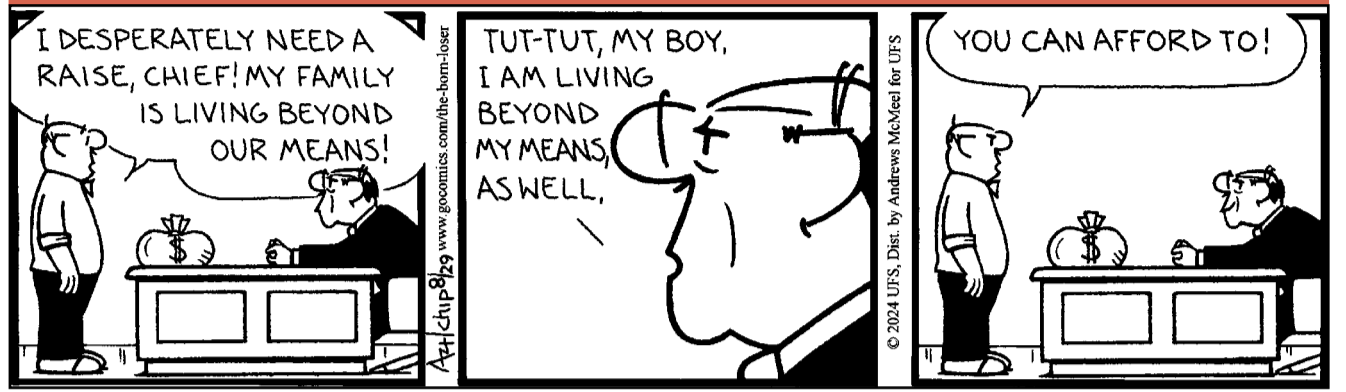
Marilyn Monroe's divorce was part of a decline which was marked by her erratic behaviour on set and persistent abuse of alcohol and drugs. The *Misfits* was to be her last completed film. Soon after, in 1962, she also made her last major public appearance, singing "Happy Birthday" to President John F Kennedy at a televised party for him. On 5 August 1962 she was found dead in her Los Angeles home, aged 36. Her death was officially attributed to suicide by drug overdose, but has been the subject of numerous conspiracy theories. She had been due to re-marry her second husband, baseball star Joe DiMaggio, three days later.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

<p>ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19</p> <p>Discuss shared finances. Adapt to changing circumstances. Concentrate closely and determine the best response. Trust a crazy hunch. Take care of each other.</p>	<p>TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20</p> <p>Listen and learn. Make sure you're both on the same page. Update and revise the plan together. Negotiate and refine. Make decisions by consensus.</p>
<p>GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21</p> <p>Good fortune follows good planning. Research moves before making them. Get expert coaching. Focus on performance details. Take advantage of new conditions. Refine technique.</p>	<p>CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22</p> <p>Enjoy hanging out with people you love. You've been taking care of business. Prioritize time to relax. Dreamy situations and solutions arise in conversation.</p>
<p>LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22</p> <p>Make domestic upgrades. Clear clutter, clean and organize. Add a new element or idea. Beautify your place. Share something delicious with friends and family.</p>	<p>VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22</p> <p>Find extra options. Research offers new possibilities. Dig and investigate. Connect the dots and put your story together. Build a case. Share discoveries.</p>
<p>LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22</p> <p>Stay in action to generate positive cash flow. A push now could get especially lucrative. Money saved is money earned. Celebrate with something delicious.</p>	<p>SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21</p> <p>Take charge for the results you want. You know what to do. Opportunities abound. Investigate options. Good fortune follows thorough planning. Lay solid groundwork.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21</p> <p>Avoid travel or overstimulating environments. Find a peaceful spot for introspection. Review plans, dreams and visions. An unexpected opportunity deserves consideration. Listen to intuition.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19</p> <p>Valuable resources, information and connections flow through your social networks. Get in conversation and find out what you can contribute. Share collaborative support.</p>
<p>AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18</p> <p>Take advantage when a professional door opens. Make your best move to fulfill a fantasy. Get expert support to pursue a dream.</p>	<p>PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20</p> <p>Preparation saves time and money. Find hidden treasure as you plot your itinerary. Make a water connection. Good news travels far. Savor dreamy exploration.</p>

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY					EASY+							
9	2	5			7	1	9		8			
	7	1	6	9	5	6		7		1		
6		2		8	1		6		7	4		
8	9	7			4		5		1	4		
		2	5	8			3	9	2	6		
2			9	7	5	6	1		7			
6	4		3		9	7	5		3			
9	3	4		2	8	9		2		6		
				5	4	1		7		2	3	8

MEDIUM					HARD					
			9		6	4	9	7		
5			2		3	1			8	5
	1			5			3			
		7	6	3	8	2	6			3
7					6	5	8			
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	3			9				1		9
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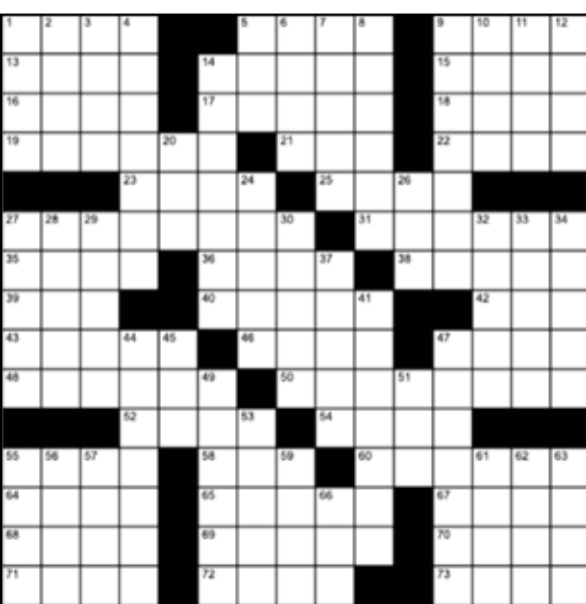
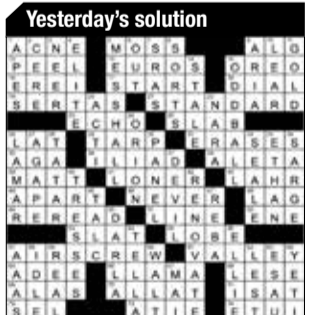
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	7	fine
Changchun	-15	-4	fine
Chengdu	9	11	rain
Chongqing	11	13	rain
Fuzhou	10	21	cloudy
Guangzhou	15	22	cloudy
Guiyang	9	16	rain
Haikou	18	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	13	overcast
Harbin	-19	-9	fine
Hefei	3	9	rain
Nanjing	6	13	rain
Shanghai	9	14	cloudy
Taipei	15	20	rain
Wuhan	8	11	fine
Hong Kong	19	21	sunny
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	-1	cloudy
Frankfurt	5	7	cloudy
Paris	9	11	rain
London	4	10	cloudy
New York	-7	0	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1-Franklin D.'s mother; 5- Bluesy James; 9- Corn Belt state; 13- Rat-___; 14- Remains of a fire; 15- TV horse; 16- For fear that; 17- Backpack part; 18- French father; 19- Conical shelters; 21- Mentalist Geller; 22- On the sheltered side; 23- Principal; 25- Sp. ladies; 27- College grounds; 31- Whole; 35- Blue-pencil; 36- Hardware fastener; 38- Polite refusal; 39- Maple Leafs' org.; 40- Crystal ball users; 42- Hosp. section; 43- Printer refill; 46- Neb. neighbor; 47- Queue before Q; 48- Attractive route; 50- Power of vision; 52- Cut-price retail event; 54- Paint can direction; 55- Elvis ___ Presley; 58- Source of iron; 60- Boxes; 64- Repeated, an island of French Polynesia; 65- Mother of Isaac; 67- Make reference to; 68- Den of wild animals and dragons; 69- Short literary composition; 70- Singer Horne; 71- Outer limit; 72- ___ precedent; 73- Memorable times;

DOWN 1- Shaker contents; 2- To ___ (just so); 3- File; 4- Try; 5- Cornerstone abbr.; 6- Drive-___ window; 7- Eye drops; 8- Have high hopes; 9- The laying on of paint thickly; 10- Baseball's Hershiser; 11- Used to be; 12- Zip-___Doo-Dah; 14- Aids; 20- ___ de cologne; 24- Hawaiian state birds; 26- ___Margret; 27- Pennies; 28- Kind of committee; 29- Pooh's creator; 30- Napped leather; 32- Of Thee ___; 33- Big name in copiers; 34- Blow one's top; 37- Cafeteria items; 41- Incomplete; 44- Trap; 45- Narrow inlet; 47- Extraordinary occurrence; 49- Shuts; 51- Baronet's title; 53- Clear the boards; 55- Word that can precede bodied and seaman; 56- Highway; 57- Not a dup.; 59- Prefix for while; 61- Wedding cake feature; 62- Sicilian mount; 63- Oceans; 66- Towing org.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Emergency calls 999 | Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283 |
| Fire department 28 572 222 | Water Supply - Report 2822 0088 |
| PJ (Open line) 993 | Telephone - Report 1000 |
| PJ (Picket) 28 557 775 | Electricity - Report 28 339 922 |
| PSP 28 573 333 | Macau Daily Times 28 716 081 |
| Customs 28 559 944 | |
| S. J. Hospital 28 313 731 | |
| Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333 | |
| Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300 | |
| IAM 28 387 333 | |
| Tourism 28 333 000 | |
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FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PSG AND MAN CITY ARE HIGH-DRAMA OPTIONS FOR HECTIC NIGHT OF 18 GAMES AT SAME TIME

GRAHAM DUNBAR

PSG 4, MAN CITY 2

THE Champions League has never before seen the kind of hectic multi-screen action that will play out in the eighth and final round of games next Wednesday.

When 18 games kick off at the same time, yesterday [Macau time], many eyes will be on Manchester and Stuttgart hoping to see the highest drama.

Paris Saint-Germain's remarkable 4-2 beating of Manchester City was the peak of this week's games as the two financial giants try to avoid embarrassing exits from the new 36-team single-standings format.

Despite the loss, Man City will be among the 24 advancing to the knockout stage if it wins at home against Club Brugge, and PSG can still be eliminated by losing at Stuttgart which sorely needs to win.

"If we don't win we won't deserve it," Man City coach Pep



PSG's Goncalo Ramos (bottom left) celebrates with teammates after scoring his side's fourth goal

Guardiola said in Paris. "We haven't got enough points and we'll have to accept it."

It is the kind of scenario UEFA wanted from the refreshed format, where it has been hard to predict how many points are needed for a top-24 place.

Back in August, simulations

by UEFA stats geeks suggested eight points would be enough to enter the knockout playoffs round.

Now it looks like the 25th-place team next Wednesday will go out with 10 or even 11 points. It could be PSG or Man City, which is currently 25th.

Liverpool and Barcelona —

on a maximum 21 points and 18, respectively — definitely will be among the top eight teams who go direct to the round of 16 in March. That pays 11 million euros (\$11.5 million) to each team from the total UEFA prize fund of close to 2.5 billion euros (\$2.6 billion).

Another 16 teams — from third-placed Arsenal down to Celtic in 18th with 12 points — have sealed their top-24 finish.

Teams that finish from ninth to 24th enter the knockout playoffs round with games scheduled on Feb. 11-12 and Feb. 18-19. That's a mostly unwanted extra load in a crowded schedule for teams chasing domestic league and cup titles.

Teams in the danger zone, risking elimination on the last day, range from 19th-placed PSV Eindhoven on 11 points to Shakhtar Donetsk in 27th with just seven points. Man City has a meager eight points and must beat Club Brugge, which has its own jeopardy in 20th place with 11 points.

Nine teams are already eliminated because they cannot catch the 10-point tally of 24th-placed Stuttgart. They include 28th-placed Bologna which was five points down, to overmatched Slovan Bratislava and Young Boys, who have lost all seven games.

What will it take to finish eighth? Currently it is Bayer Leverkusen with 13 points and a goal difference of plus-6, which is the first tiebreaker. The cut shapes to come at 16 points, or 15 with a healthy goal difference. Leverkusen will host already-eliminated Sparta Prague.

Arsenal and Inter Milan, on 16 points, look safe barring a wild set of results aligning. They control their own destiny when Arsenal plays at low-ranked Girona, and Inter hosts 10th-placed Monaco.

Atletico Madrid and AC Milan also look strong on 15 points. Atletico finishes at already-eliminated Salzburg, and Milan goes to Dinamo Zagreb, which is 26th and must win to stay in contention. **MDT/AP**

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TENNIS | AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Madison Keys upsets Iga Swiatek and will face Aryna Sabalenka in the final

HOWARD FENDRICH,
MELBOURNE

WHEN Madison Keys finally finished off her 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (10-8) upset of No. 2 Iga Swiatek in a high-intensity, high-quality Australian Open semifinal yesterday night, saving a match point along the way, the 29-year-old American crouched on the court and placed a hand on her white hat.

She had a hard time believing it all. The comeback. What Keys called an "extra dramatic finish." The victory over five-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek, who'd been on the most dominant run at Melbourne Park in a dozen years. And now the chance to play in her second Grand Slam final, a long wait after being the 2017 U.S. Open runner-up.

"I'm still trying to catch up to everything that's happening," said the 19th-seeded Keys, who will face No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, the two-time defending cham-



Madison Keys

pion, for the trophy Saturday. "I felt like I was just fighting to stay in it. ... It was so up and down and so many big points."

Just to be sure, Keys asked whether Swiatek was, indeed, one point from victory. Yes, Madison, she was, while serving at 6-5, 40-30, but missed a backhand into the net, then even-

tually getting broken by double-faulting, sending the contest to a first-to-10, win-by-two tie-breaker.

"I felt like I blacked out there at some point," Keys said, "and was out there running around."

Whatever she was doing, it worked. Keys claimed more games in the semifinal than the 14

total that Swiatek dropped in her five previous matches over the past two weeks.

Sabalenka beat good friend Paula Badosa 6-4, 6-2 earlier Thursday. Sabalenka, a 26-year-old from Belarus, can become the first woman since 1999 to complete a threepeat.

"If she plays like this," the 11th-seeded Badosa said, "I mean, we can already give her the trophy."

Keys might have something to say about that.

Still, Sabalenka won her first major trophy at Melbourne Park in 2023, and she since has added two more — in Australia a year ago and at the U.S. Open last September.

"I have goosebumps. I'm so proud of myself," Sabalenka said.

Swiatek had not lost a single service game since the first round, but was broken three times by Keys in the first set alone and eight times in all.

That included each of Swiatek's first two times serving,

making clear right from the get-go this would not be her usual sort of day. And while Swiatek did eke out the opening set, she was overwhelmed in the second, trailing 5-0 before getting a game.

This was the big-hitting Keys at her very best. She turns 30 next month.

She was good enough to get through this one, which was as tight as can be down the stretch.

"At the end, I feel like we were both kind of battling some nerves. ... It just became who can get that final point and who can be a little bit better than the other one," Keys said. "And I'm happy it was me."

Sabalenka, a 26-year-old from Belarus, trailed 2-0, 40-love at the start but quickly figured things out, especially once Rod Laver Arena's retractable roof was shut in the first set because of a drizzle. She straightened her strokes and overpowered Badosa, who eliminated No. 3 Coco Gauff to reach her first major semifinal. **MDT/AP**

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Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



THIS IS HOW TO DIVINE CHINA VANKE'S FUTURE

With about \$5 billion in debt coming due this year, time is running out for China Vanke Co., the country's largest privately-held real estate developer.

Vanke has no effective management at the top. State-owned Shenzhen Metro Group Co., its largest shareholder, held only a 27% stake as of last September, making it arguably a passive investor. By June, the company no longer had enough cash to cover short-term debt. Meanwhile, property sales remain anemic despite China's housing rescue measures. Officials in Shenzhen, where Vanke is headquartered, held a closed-door meeting to discuss Vanke's business operations on Friday, Bloomberg News reported.

The question now is how a restructuring might play out and what Vanke's future could look like. Having brainstormed with investors onshore and off, I've mapped out three plausible outcomes: a blue-sky scenario, Squid Game or a muddled mess.

Let's consider the blue-sky scenario first. China's primary property market is now dominated by state-owned players, whom consumers trust will be able to deliver pre-sold homes on time. A consortium of state-owned enterprises may take over and become strategic investors in Vanke as a way to consolidate the industry as well as to provide national service and stabilize the housing market.

The white knights will probably come with strings attached. In exchange for their capital injection, a debt restructuring that forces creditors to absorb losses is inevitable.

The good news is that lenders can expect better eventual payouts. Vanke's property sales might just start to bottom out once it obtains the prized state-owned status. In addition, past recovery rates for distressed SOEs tended to be much higher than their privately-held counterparts.

If white knights don't emerge, we might stare into an ugly Squid Gam — the violent South Korean survival thriller — being played out in real life. Imagine so-called "creditor-on-creditor violence," where lenders step over each other to claw their money back.

Already, we are seeing some of that rowdy behavior rearing its head. Vanke recently settled unpaid bills of 703 million yuan with its property management subsidiary Onewo Inc., by transferring equity rights of some of its commercial assets. In an interview with local media, Onewo's chairman said that the firm would prefer to be repaid in cash, but if that's not possible, its management needs to act fast and seize Vanke's properties before others do.

Vanke has been in the midst of replacing maturing loans with collateralized bank borrowings. In the first half of 2024, it managed to obtain 63 billion yuan of secured bank credit. While the company may say this maneuver helps lower future interest payments, smaller creditors are legitimately worried that banks are conducting land grabs before a formal restructuring kicks off. For bondholders, expect dismal recovery rates under this scenario.

Since Vanke operates in China, where policymakers are fond of kicking the can down the road, we must also consider a muddled outcome.

It's possible that the municipal government of Shenzhen provides some liquidity so the developer might scrape by as its debt maturity wall closes in. Of course, the state will have to try a lot harder, because Vanke's debt pile this year is a lot higher than it was in 2024.

But procrastination is rarely a good fix.

Readers might ask why investors are so pessimistic. I would say: To divine Vanke's future, one must look at its past. The developer has committed the original sin, in that it's not a state-owned entity.

Perhaps it's time that the government proves to investors that their perceptions are wrong — that in the distressed debt market, companies offer the same recovery rates, regardless of their ownership types. [Abridged]

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

Saudi Arabia's crown prince said yesterday the kingdom wants to invest \$600 billion in the United States over the next four years, comments that came after President Donald Trump earlier put a price tag on returning to the kingdom as his first foreign trip.

Trump's 2017 trip to Saudi Arabia upended a tradition of U.S. presidents first heading to the United Kingdom as their first trip abroad.

It also underscored his administration's close ties to the rulers of the oil-rich Gulf states as his eponymous real estate company

has pursued deals across the region as well.

The comments from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, reported yesterday by the state-run Saudi Press Agency, came in a phone call with Trump. It marked Trump's first call with a foreign leader since his inauguration Monday.

"The crown prince affirmed the kingdom's intention to broaden its investments and trade with the United States over the next four years, in the amount of \$600 billion, and potentially beyond that," the report said.



Karla Sofia Gascón, right, and Zoe Saldaña in a scene from "Emilia Pérez"

'EMILIA PÉREZ' LEADS OSCAR NOMINATIONS WITH 13

JAKE COYLE, MDT/AP FILM WRITER

In the wake of devastating wildfires in Los Angeles that struck at the heart of the movie industry, an embattled Hollywood lined up behind the Netflix narco-musical about trans identity "Emilia Pérez" in Oscar nominations yesterday.

Jacques Audiard's "Emilia Pérez," a Spanish language, French-made film, dominated the nominations with a leading 13 nominations, including best picture and best actress for Karla Sofia Gascón, making her the first openly trans actor ever nominated for an Oscar. The film also landed nominations for directing, original screenplay, two of its songs and for Zoe Saldaña.

Netflix, despite its starring role in Hollywood, has never won best picture.

"Emilia Pérez," though, may be its best chance yet. It became the most nominated non-English language film ever, surpassing Netflix's own "Roma," which scored 10 nominations.

Another musical — "Wicked," the smash Broadway adaptation — came away with nearly as many nominations. Jon M. Chu's lavish "Wizard of Oz" riff scored 10 nominations, including best picture and acting nods for its stars Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande. "The Brutalist," Brady

Corbet's postwar epic filmed in VistaVision, also came away with a commanding 10 nominations.

The nominees for best picture are: "Anora"; "The Brutalist"; "A Complete Unknown"; "Conclave"; "Dune: Part Two"; "Emilia Pérez"; "I'm Still Here"; "Nickel Boys"; "The Substance"; "Wicked."

In a wide-open Oscar race, the six most honored films — "Emilia Pérez," "Wicked," "The Brutalist," "Anora" (six nominations) "Conclave" (eight nominations) and "A Complete Unknown" (eight nominations) — all fared as expected. The biggest surprises were the Brazilian film "I'm Still Here," which also landed Fernanda Torres a best actress nomination.

One of 2024's most audacious films, "The Apprentice" landed a surprising pair of nominations, for Sebastian Stan and Jeremy Strong. The film dramatizes the formative years of President Donald Trump's emergence in New York real estate under the tutelage of attorney Roy Cohn. Trump has called those involved with the film "human scum."

In the best actor category, where Stan and Brody were nominated, the other nominees were Timothée Chalamet ("A Complete Unknown"), Colman Domingo ("Sing Sing") and Ralph Fiennes ("Conclave").

Most notably left out was Daniel Craig, acclaimed for his very un-James Bond performance in "Queer."

Best actress, a category that Demi Moore has appeared to have locked up for her full-bodied performance in "The Substance," saw nominations for Moore, Gascón, Torres, Erivo and the star of "Anora," Mikey Madison. Arguably the year's most competitive category, that left out Marianne Jean-Baptiste ("Hard Truths"), Pamela Anderson, "The Last Showgirl"), Nicole Kidman ("Babygirl") and Angelina Jolie ("Maria").

In the directing category, "The Substance" filmmaker Coralie Fargeat managed to crack into the otherwise all-male group of Sean Baker ("Anora"), Corbet, Audiard and James Mangold ("A Complete Unknown"). Most had expected Edward Berger to be nominated for directing the papal thriller "Conclave."

Supporting actor was led by Kieran Culkin, the favorite for the award, for his performance in "A Real Pain." The other nominees were: Yura Borisov ("Anora"), Guy Pearce ("The Brutalist"), Edward Norton ("A Complete Unknown") and Strong.

The supporting actress nominations went to Grande, Saldaña, Jones, Monica Barbaro ("A Complete Unknown") and Isabella Rossellini ("Conclave"). MDT/AP



Davos NATO chief Mark Rutte warned that a Russian victory in Ukraine would erode NATO's credibility, costing trillions to restore. Speaking at Davos, yesterday [Macau time], Rutte urged continued support for Ukraine and cautioned against geopolitical consequences of prematurely elevating Vladimir Putin through peace negotiations.



France Families yesterday sued TikTok over harmful content linked to teen suicides, alleging its algorithm promotes despair. TikTok denies the claims, citing content moderation efforts. Critics argue the platform inadequately safeguards users, drawing comparisons to stricter regulations in its Chinese version, Douyin.

Greek authorities discovered 66 migrants on Crete yesterday, arriving from Libya on a wooden boat. The group, mostly from Bangladesh, Egypt, and Sudan, paid smugglers \$2,000 each for the journey. Rising Mediterranean crossings highlight shifting smuggling routes amid increased patrols near Turkey.



Energy A record 47% of the EU's electricity came from renewables in 2024, underscoring progress in transitioning from fossil fuels. In 2023, renewable energy contributions by country included Brazil (88.9%), Canada (66.5%), China (30.6%), the U.S. (22.7%), Japan (22%), and South Korea (9%).